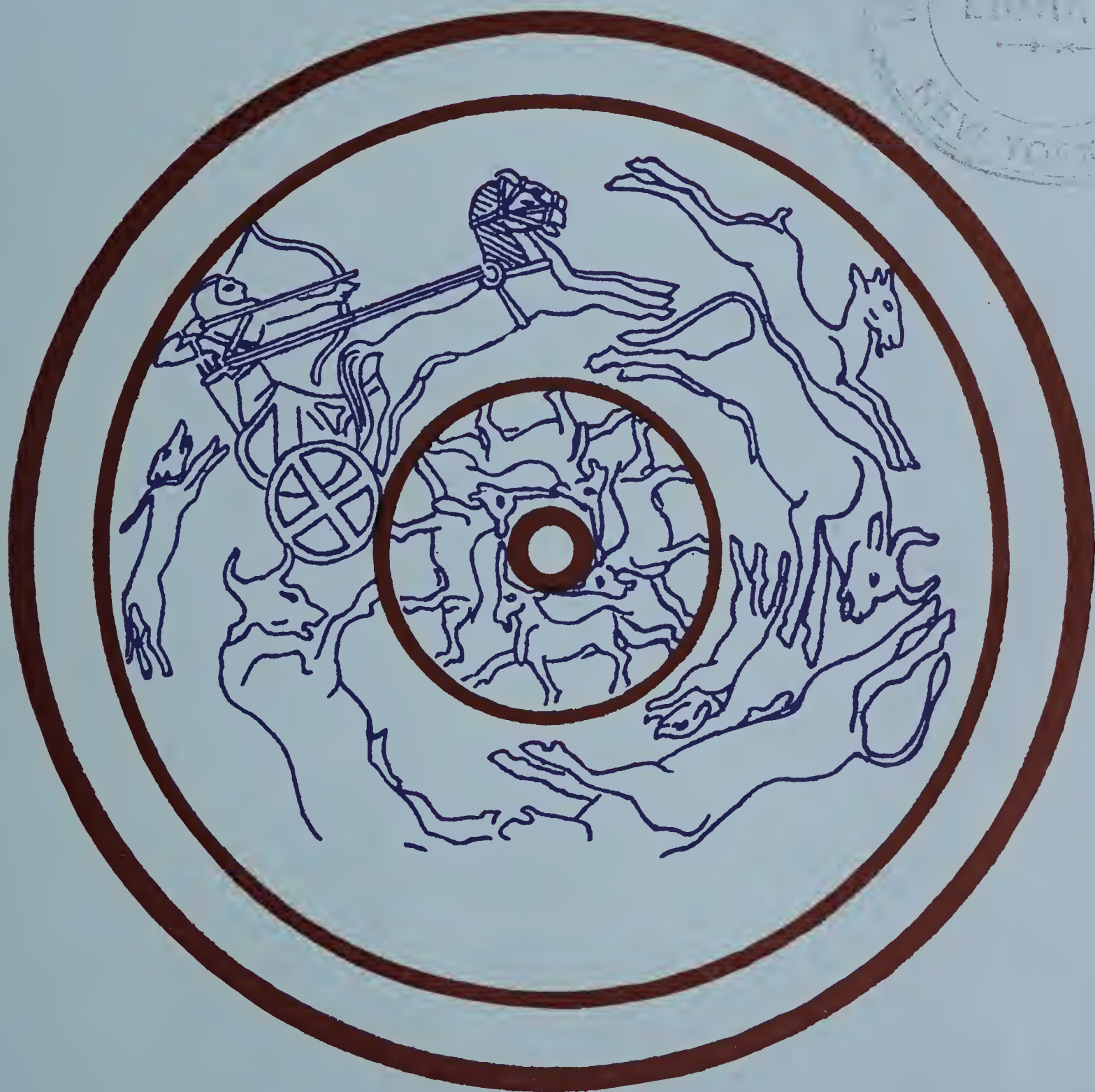


Ras
Africa

Keep for information

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INSTITUTE OF SEMITO-AFRICAN STUDIES



From an embossed golden bowl
found at Ras Shamra (ancient Ugarit, on the northern coast of Syria).
Canaanite art, fourteenth century B. C.

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WHY AN INSTITUTE OF SEMITO-AFRICAN STUDIES?

The Institute of Semito-African Studies hopes to fill a great gap in the knowledge of one of the main areas of the globe.

While Europe, America and, in part, Asia have been studied in most of their aspects, the regions south and south-east of the centrally-located Mediterranean — that is, Africa and the Semitic Near East — have not been surveyed to any sufficient degree from the vital point of view of their human relations. Yet this area is of the utmost importance, both in the history of mankind and in the present affairs of the world.



As for the past, Africa — especially the northern half of it — played a prominent part in the origins of society, while the neighboring regions of the Near East became, even before the earliest written records, and remained until comparatively recent times a major center of civilization.

Africa and the Semitic Near East have so much in common, through similarity of physical features and age-old human intercourse, that they should be considered as a unit, almost as one single continent.

Every attempt to study separately the various parts of this indivisible whole leads necessarily to incomplete and therefore mis-

taken conclusions. This has often been the error of special sciences, too narrow in geographical scope or in method of approach. Research which locks itself up in isolated provinces — Egypt, Palestine, Mesopotamia, etc. — or in circumscribed fields of knowledge, such as Oriental religions, Semitic languages, African ethnography, may yield a wealth of detailed information, but fails to reveal the significance of the Semito-African "cultural continent" and to provide a proper estimate of its component factors.

Even the Near East, whose importance as one of the "cradles of civilization" is generally recognized, has been considered merely as a field of archaeological, biblical and other special research; but the overall picture of the Levant still lies beyond the horizon of modern science. There is no lack of Oriental Institutes and Societies studying the Near East according to European, "Western" conceptions and interests, or in relation to Asiatic questions. None, however, is devoted to an organic synthesis of the Semitic Orient, considered for its own sake, and viewed — as it should be — in the broad, natural frame of the Mediterranean basin and the African continent, to which the Levant essentially belongs.

The coordination of Semito-African studies, in addition to its scientific importance, should also be of great value for the understanding, and therefore the constructive solution, of the many present-day problems — economic, social, cultural and political — connected with Africa and the Near East.

In our "global world," the Near East remains an essential link between continents and a center of international interest and danger; the neighboring Africa, between the Mediterranean and two great Oceans, also ranks as a strategic region in "global" policy. In fact, the entire Semito-African area becomes now the main field of colonial imperialism and therefore — one of the most explosive parts of the world, seething with political, ideological, ethnic and so-called "racial" conflicts and contradictions.

If anywhere, here is the place where deep insight and sound judgment are imperative. They are sadly lacking; in part, because the history of native societies has not been comprehended, in part — because even the present conditions in the Semito-African area are still hidden behind a screen of half-truth and misunderstanding. Worse than that, many an unscientific, erroneous and therefore dangerous notion has been allowed to grow during the last decades, — such as for instance Panarabism, the myth of a self-contained "Arab world," which is supposed to cover the Near East and the northern half of Africa.

This and similar fallacies, clouding both the past and the present, prevent a clear vision of the Semito-African area and hinder any practical approach to its crucial problems. More than ever, genuine and therefore efficient knowledge requires a harmo-

nious coordination of independent research, in the many fields relating to this great section of mankind.

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Such a coordinated knowledge, and the better understanding which it provides, are important not only to scholars, interested in widening their own scientific horizon, but also to laymen, in all walks of life, who want to grasp the realities of a world in which Africa and the Near East played and are to play a conspicuous part.

This applies to all men, but especially to those, Christians or Jews, Moslems or Pagans, Blacks or Whites, who belong by residence, origin or loyalty to one of the Semito-African peoples or communities. For them, the knowledge of their own collective past and present is the very condition of fruitful thought and action, of self-respect, of spiritual and physical survival. A condition which unfortunately is not yet fulfilled, and is not likely to be fulfilled, as long as there is no institution of learning devoted to the synthesis of the Near East and Africa.

While retaining its purely scientific character, nay — because of this character, — the Institute of Semito-African Studies may well become a factor in the revival and cultural emancipation of peoples who are the "underdogs" in the modern world: — the colonial and semi-colonial peoples of Africa and the Near East, as well as their communities in exile, including one of the oldest among them, Jewry. For while the Jewish problem is world-wide in scope, its attempted solution — through the Hebrew rebirth in Palestine — links up with the major issues of the Levant and of the Semito-African area as a whole.

THE CHARTER

(PROPOSED)

INSTITUTE OF SEMITO-AFRICAN STUDIES

THE Institute of Semito-African Studies is set up to carry on research in the history and prehistory of the areas roughly designated by the Eastern Mediterranean coast and the North African coast, with the adjacent hinterlands; but no limitation is imposed upon any researcher who may find that his study requires him to transcend the Semito-North African area, as for example, in the Mediterranean islands, in Anatolia, Armenia, Mesopotamia, Ethiopia, the Sudan, Spain.

The Institute of Semito-African Studies shall be governed by a body of trustees, not less than seven nor more than 21.

The Board of Trustees shall elect a body of scholars interested in the history and prehistory of the Semito-African area, who have given evidence of their interest through publications or through scholarly positions. This body shall be known as the Research Associates of the Semito-African Institute.

The Institute of Semito-African Studies may enlist a group of friends, with or without scholarly qualification, to be known as Patrons of the Semito-African Institute.

The Institute of Semito-African Studies, hereinafter designated for simplicity as the

Institute, shall seek to promote research, and provide for publication by books, articles or lectures of the result of researches conducted by the Research Associates, individually or in cooperation, within the field as above defined.

For the conduct of research, the Research Associates shall set up a Committee of scholars, to outline projects to be undertaken, or to authorize projects submitted by individual members, and to pass judgment on the completed results of such researches. Such judgments can be concerned only with questions of scientific validity.

While the Committee of the Research Associates may reject for support or publication any project that does not command its scholarly approval, the Institute does not presume to interfere with publication on his own authority, by any member of the body of Research Associates.

It is understood that the Research Associates, severally and collectively, in so far as they carry on work under the Institute, are bound by the principle of following the truth wherever it may lead, regardless of personal consequences.

PREHISTORY

Prehistory is a misnomer. Far from being a mere introduction to history, it tells some of the decisive tales in the story of human culture, — a venture much older than the oldest written records of Egypt or Mesopotamia.

Especially so in Africa and around the Mediterranean. There, the roots of societies lay hidden beyond the few millennia of "historical times." Prehistory, therefore, becomes essential for the understanding of the past and present of Semito-African peoples.

In other words, one cannot be content with the "cradle of civilization" — one of the many cradles! — in the Near East. One has to broaden the rather provincial horizon of Egyptian or Mesopotamian archaeology. One has even to take into account changes of landscape and climate, almost geological in scope.

The over-specialization of modern knowledge has set up artificial boundaries which must be discarded. Many sciences have to be merged in an effort of coordination. The synthesis should take in at least the western parts of the Old World, the area which may be called "Eurafrican," — it being well understood that the Near East belongs to Africa and to the Mediterranean more than to Asia.

Only by doing so can we hope to throw light on the nature of Eurafrican civilized life, — a life common to the West and the Near East, to White Men and to Black, to Semites and to non-Semitic speaking peoples.

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Such a synthesis can be attempted now, owing to studies and discoveries made during the last decades in various fields, such as geology, anthropology, linguistics and prehistoric art. Particularly important are the thousands of cave and rock paintings, of engravings and carvings, many of them 10,000 years old. They are scattered from France to the Sahara, and from the foot of Lebanon to South Africa. This is an unwritten but eloquent record

of "prehistoric history," a picture-Bible of forgotten worlds. Forgotten — and yet important, because they are the fountainhead of our own world, of our own culture, both in the "West" and the "East."

10,000 years ago, the northern half of Africa was the connecting link between East and West, between South and North, and the main theater of human endeavor. When the ice-caps of the last glacial period covered Northern Europe, when Britain was not even an island, when the mammoth roamed the frozen steppes of France and Europeans dwelt in caves, — the huge Sahara was not yet an uninterrupted desert. In its prairies, on the banks of its many streams, equatorial, tropical, northern animals met, and so did the various races of man who hunted the beasts and worshipped them as totems.

Blacks and Whites exchanged ideas and mixed freely. In fact, more or less Negroid peoples dwelt in Palestine as well as in Egypt, and settled in Spain and Southern France. Interrelated arts and ways of life extended from the Western Mediterranean down to the Cape, over thousands of years, beginning in the Glacial Age and dying out in comparatively recent times.

Thus, the first "historical" civilizations of Egypt, the Mediterranean and the Semitic East, the civilizations of biblical and classical antiquity, as well as the surviving cultures of Black Africa, are not at all isolated and self-contained. They are more or less direct heirs to a great common "prehistoric" past.

A past older than the tremendous natural and economic revolutions which brought agriculture and pastoral life to Africa and the Near East, and thence — to Europe and Asia, while changing the very coastlines in the West and transforming the Sahara into a desert. Crises as decisive in the story of mankind as the most modern ones; crises whose dim recollection may well be found even in the myths of many an ancient people.

1 & 2 — Prehistoric rock-engraving, Sahara.

3 — " cave-painting, France.

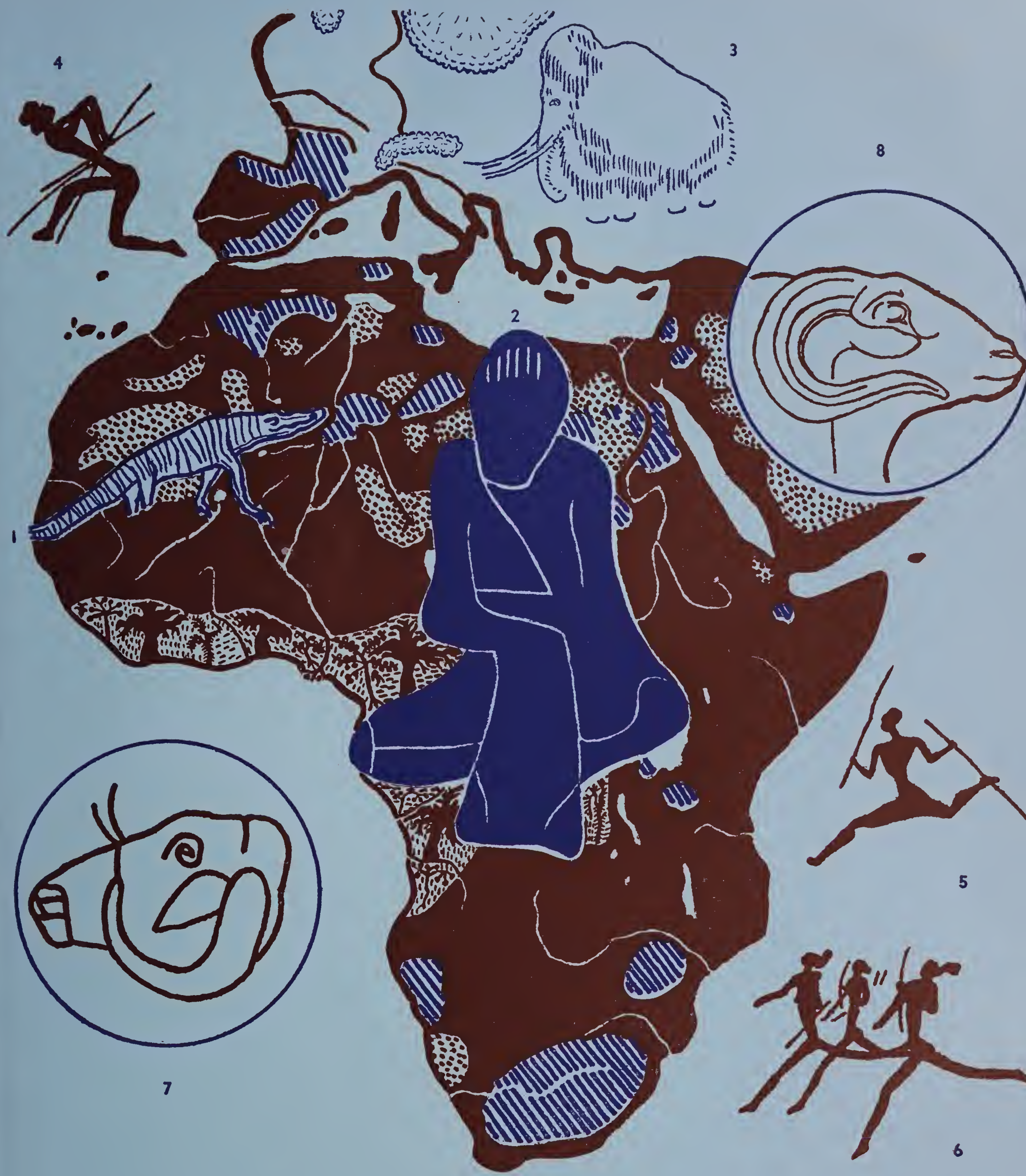
4 - 6 — " rock-paintings:

4 - Spain, 5 - Sahara, 6 - South Africa

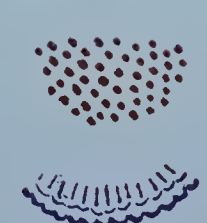
7 - 8 — Head of sacred ram:

7 — Prehistoric rock-engraving, Sahara.

8 — Low-relief, Pharaonic Egypt.



main areas of prehistoric art



prehistoric deserts

" ice-caps

The trees in the equatorial forest are reproduced from prehistoric South-African rock-paintings.

PAGAN ANTIQUITY



Canaanite storm-god — akin to the biblical Jehovah. From an engraved stela, Ras Shamra, fourteenth century B.C.

Pagan antiquity — a most glorious period in the past of the Semito-African area — covers three millennia prior to the rise of Judaism and Christianity. Yet it has not been studied as an organic whole. Its unity, in time and space, east and south of the Mediterranean, its importance in the shaping of native societies, its far-reaching, almost world-wide influence require more attention than has been devoted to it by modern scholarship.

Sciences dealing with classical, Graeco-Roman antiquity, with the Bible, with the archaeological Near East, — Ancient History, Orientalism, Semitics, Egyptology, Sumerology, etc., — carve out distinct provinces or periods and consider them from the European, "Western," or from the "Oriental," Asiatic angle, or from such late points of view as Judaism and Christendom. These sciences, while adding to our knowledge of facts, tend also to isolate these facts from their native Semito-African background. They inevitably add to the current stock of misunderstandings.

Thus, classical antiquity has been studied in its relations to Eurasia and the Indo-European language-family (and more recently — to particular archaeological provinces such as the Aegean and Mesopo-

tamia). But the many underlying Semito-African elements have been well-nigh ignored, or denied. This is hardly a progress since the days of Herodotus, "father of history."

The ancient Greeks acknowledged their indebtedness to Africa, — not only to Egypt, but also to the Libyans, that is the Berbers; they stressed very much the part played in the Mediterranean by the sea-going Semites, — the Canaanites, whom they called Phoenicians. Recent discoveries in Africa and the Levant confirm the correctness of this ancient outlook. The modern concept of a purely "Indo-European" Graeco-Roman antiquity must be revised. But this will remain impossible, until the Semito-African area has been studied and understood for its own sake.

A similar misunderstanding clouds the interpretation of the Bible. This "best seller," mistranslated for centuries, remains a riddle, after generations of painstaking philological and theological criticism. It has been read merely as the "Holy Scriptures" of Jewish and Christian religions, although these religions appeared very late in antiquity, late even in the history of the Bible itself. For the Bible is not one "book," but a collection of writings of various ages, many of them pagan in spirit and origin, and antedating by centuries the very birth of Judaism.



Canaanite (Phoenician) cargo-ship, according to ancient Near-Eastern and North-African pictures. Such were the biblical "Vessels of Tarshish".



West-African sea-god. Bronze from Ife, Nigeria. (The tradition of this art goes back to the first millennium B.C.)



The older texts of the Bible are among the many products of a single society, — not Jewish but pagan: the Hebrew or Canaanite or Phoenician society; they are written in a language which may be called Phoenician or Canaanite as well as Hebrew, for it is one single language. The "World of the Bible" cannot be explained by referring it to one of its late phenomena, Judaism; nor even by comparing it with one among its early neighbors, — archaeologic Mesopotamia. It has to be taken for what it is: an expression of Canaanite history in the general frame of Semito-African antiquity.

Orientalism, tied to Near Eastern archaeology, hardly ever looks beyond Pharaonic Egypt. It thus discards great events which took place in and around ancient Africa and which are of particular importance for Canaanite (that is also Hebrew) history. The commercial and maritime enterprises of Hiram and Solomon reaching into the Atlantic and the Indian Ocean, the Tyrian colonies around the Mediterranean, the great African Empire of Carthage were the main connecting links between East and West, between the "White" and "Black" halves of Eurafrica. Furthermore, the survival of this canaanite "colonial world" into Roman times became a decisive factor in the later spread of missionary Judaism and in the formation of the Jewish Diaspora, as well as in the origins of the first Christian churches.

Libyan, or Berber, Africa also played its part in antiquity; so did inner Africa, with its Black or Negroid peoples, whom the Greeks called Ethiopians. That the "Dark Continent" was isolated and unimportant in historic times is a misconception. The Ancients showed little interest in "racial" problems and certainly did not consider the Ethiopians as "inferiors."

Semitics, that is the comparative study of Semitic languages and Semitic-speaking peoples, also suffers from delusions, most of which originated in the superficial approach of nineteenth century scholarship. Thus, there never was such a thing as a "Semitic race." The Semitic peoples did not spread from a "cradle" in desert Arabia. They were not, in the beginning, camel-riding nomads like the Arabs



Egyptian painting (ca. 1300 B.C.) representing four ethnic types among the neighboring peoples of Egypt.

From left to right:
Ethiopian (Negro), Canaanite (Hebrew), Nubian, Libyan (Berber).

of another age. In fact, the camel was domesticated rather late in the history of ancient Semites.

The Semitic languages themselves are not an isolated family. They are bound by strong ties of origin and structure to African tongues, such as Libyan (Berber), Egyptian (Coptic), the Kushitic group. All in all, this widespread "Hamito-Semitic" family, whose comparative study has hardly begun, was and remains more African than Asiatic.

A science of Semito-African antiquity, true to its scope, should remove these and other fundamental misunderstandings. They bar a correct view of both Western and Eastern civilizations, in the past and therefore also in the present.



Hamito-Semitic languages.

Semitic languages.

Other languages of the Semito-Hamitic family.

Home and overseas territories where Canaanite (Hebrew) was in use.

Main routes of Canaanite sea-trade and discovery.



Semitic goddess of waters. Statue found in the palace of Mari on the Euphrates. (Syria; eighteenth century B.C.)



Canaanite goddess with child.
Terracotta from the temple of Siagu.
(Tunisia, neo-punic period around the
beginning of the Christian era)

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| ☞ Sunnite Moslems | + Roman Christians |
| ○ Shiites and other Moslem sects | ✕ Eastern Christian communities |
| ★ Jews | ● Other religions, or "pagans" |



THE RECENT PAST

The recent past — since the beginning of the Christian era — suffers no less than earlier periods from the lack of a Semito-African synthesis. The world around the Mediterranean has been cut in two and all the attention focused on the north-western half, — a situation unsatisfactory even from the western point of view: it results in a "World History" leaving out too much of the world.

Actually, some of the main influences which shaped the West in Christian centuries spread from across the Mediterranean: not only Judaism and early Christianity, but also pagan and classical traditions, which survived into Islamic times and were active long before the European Renaissance.

On the other hand, Semito-African history during the last two millennia has followed trends of its own and cannot be fitted into the western pattern of Middle Ages and Modern Times. After the outburst of "universal religions," Africa and the Near East did not witness, as Europe did, a period of cultural growth and economic expansion, but rather a general decline in all forms of civilized life, a decline accelerated by devastating invasions and by the spread of nomadism. Finally, the whole area became a field of ruins, physical and spiritual, subject to foreign control.

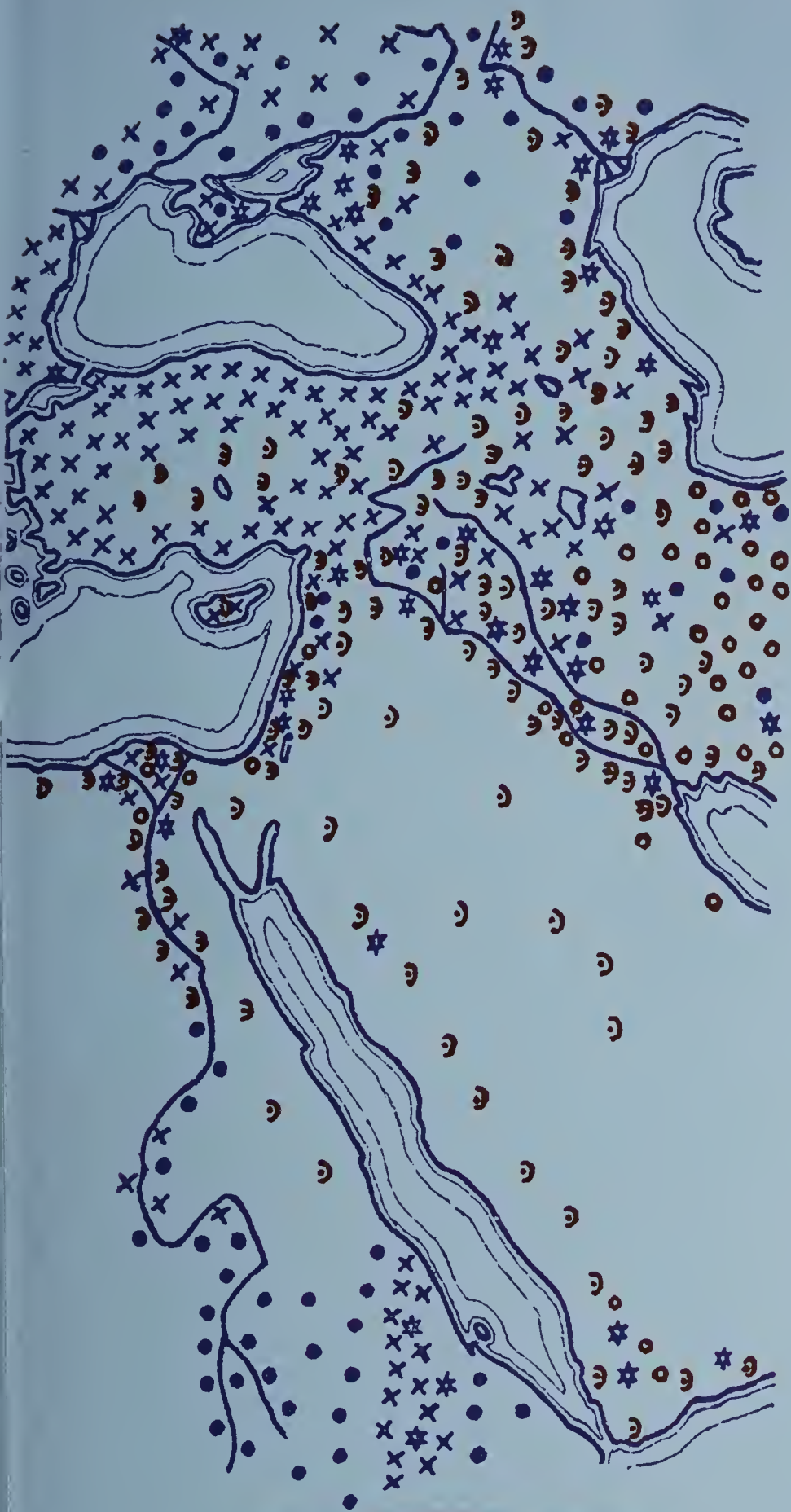
Such evolution can hardly be explained by the western concept of progress. The problem of past greatness and present decay requires new methods of interpretation, not burdened by either modern or traditional preconceptions.

Among the latter, none is more inadequate than the conventional "religious" approach. One speaks of Jewish, Christian, Moslem "worlds," as if they were independent and self-sufficient. They were not, — least of all in the Semito-African area, in which they originated and developed side by side. Nor did the various creeds obliterate the geographical and historical peculiarities which make up countries and peoples. Nor did they stop the many currents of local and international life, which started in pagan antiquity, long before the very birth of churches.

The picture derived from church-history is not even consistent with the plainest facts. We have not been prepared to find a "pagan Madonna" in an African Canaanite temple, or a Roman-looking Moses painted on the walls of a Syrian synagogue, or frescoes of nude women in the castle of an Arab Caliph in Transjordan.

As far as the Semito-African past is concerned, the main features of Jewish, Christian, Moslem and other communities have been equally overlooked.

Judaism has been studied as the specific religion of Judea, and the Jews mistaken for a "race" of Judean exiles. But the major problems have been neglected: the Canaanite roots and Semito-African developments, immensely broader than the conventional Judean frame. For Judaism spread around the "phoenician" Mediterranean, making many converts among Semitic and non-Semitic peoples; it played a part, not only religious, but



Moses and the burning bush.
Fresco in the synagogue of Dura on the Euphrates.
(Syria, third century CE)

political, in North Africa and Arabia, in Ethiopia and Southern Russia. What it became finally is not a "race", but a caste, abnormal by modern standards, but not without parallels in late Semito-African history.

The survival, through this caste, of the Canaanite or Hebrew language and tradition remains to be scientifically explained. Also, current "World History" fails to grasp the twofold process of Jewish disintegration in the Diaspora and of Hebrew revival in Canaan.

The native Christian churches, which differ considerably from Graeco-Roman and modern western Christianity, have received little attention, despite their importance. Coptic, Abyssinian, Syrian and other communities preserved pre-islamic cultures and languages through centuries of invasions and decay. The Maronites of Lebanon, the Assyrians, etc., are castes not unlike the Jewish and heirs to a Canaanite and Aramean past.

Islam, in the Semito-African area, has been approached from the Arab angle. Indeed, Islam originated in Arabia and Arabic remained its sacred language. But few of the Moslem peoples were of Arab origin, and many did not even speak Arabic. Trends and sects, States and cultures of Islam express, in the main, a history foreign to Arabia and to the so-called "Arab race". This history has not yet been studied as it should: in terms of Berbers and Moors, Egyptians and Sudanese, Iranians and Turks, and also in terms of the older Semitic communities, which did not disappear from around the Mediterranean. As for the civilization of early Islamic times, it was international, inter-racial and inter-denominational; it became "Arab" only in the romantic theories of the nineteenth century.



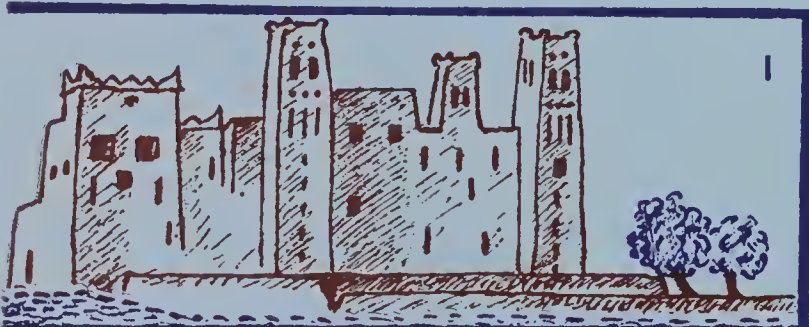
Fresco in the castle of the Umayyad Caliphs at Qusseir el-Amr.
(Transjordan, ca. 700 CE)



Eclectic Mediterranean types of architecture:

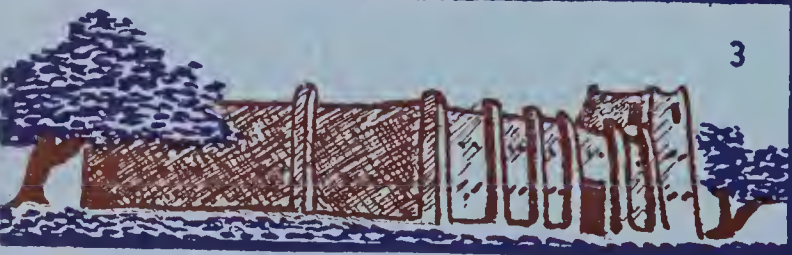


- 1 — Kabyle peasant house, Algeria;
2 — Christian villa at Tripolis, Lebanon;
3 — A view in Hebrew Haifa, Palestine.



Types of architecture in the arid belt:

- 1 — Fortified communal dwelling in Southern Morocco;
2 — Fortified castle in Hadramut;
3 — Mosque in the Western Sudan.



LANGUAGES AND WAYS OF LIFE

Mainly settled population:

- Arabic-speaking
- Non-Arabic "

Scattered nomadic population:

- Arabic-speaking
- Non-Arabic "

- Uninhabited



Archaic types of architecture:

- 1 — Beehive hut in the Congo;
2 — Beehive hut, Northern Syria.



THE PRESENT

The present derives from the past and branches off into the future: interest in history, awareness of contemporary facts, concern about coming events should go together. Indeed, in the Near East and Africa, where modern revolutions have not yet obliterated ancient structures and traditional attitudes, the future and past are facing each other in every aspect of present-day life.

This is apparent even in specialized fields of modern science. Ethnography, for instance, dealing with almost prehistoric, yet still surviving African cultures, throws light on ancient Biblical as well as on latest Near Eastern lore and society; or linguistics, examining living Berber dialects, contributes to solve the age-old question of Semitic origins, a question which has never been more relevant than today.

In the Semito-African area, maybe more than anywhere else, the knowledge of what happened long ago and the understanding of what is happening now are inseparable. Therefore, the Institute must aim at coordinating the sciences concerned with the past and the research dealing with present and future problems.

Historical fallacies, some of which have been mentioned above, lead necessarily to a mistaken view of present-day realities. Especially when the latter seem remote to the Western observer, or when they fail to support the European prejudices concerning "colonial" or "imperial" Africa and Near East.

An outstanding example of historical misconception, imported by foreign scholarship and fostered by foreign domination, is to be found in the notion of an "Arab world," covering the northern half of the Semito-African area. As far as the past is concerned, the inadequacy of what may be termed the Arab myth has already been pointed out. As for the present, this widespread myth hides behind a hasty generalization the complexities of Near Eastern and African life.

Since linguistic nationalism developed in nineteenth century Europe, language and nationhood have been often confused. Nevertheless, the two phenomena do not usually coincide: thus, the Arabic-speaking Egyptians are no more Arabs than the English-speaking Irishmen are English.

In fact, the name "Arabs," in the Arabic language itself, applies to people originating in Arabia, such as the nomadic Beduins, or at most — to such tribes which became assimilated to them in their way of life. But the more important sedentary communities speaking the various Arabic dialects never formed and do not form today a national body, whether Arab or not, — despite the recent tendency, in diplomatic affairs, in the press, etc., to misuse this name by loosely applying it to everything native in North Africa and the Near East.

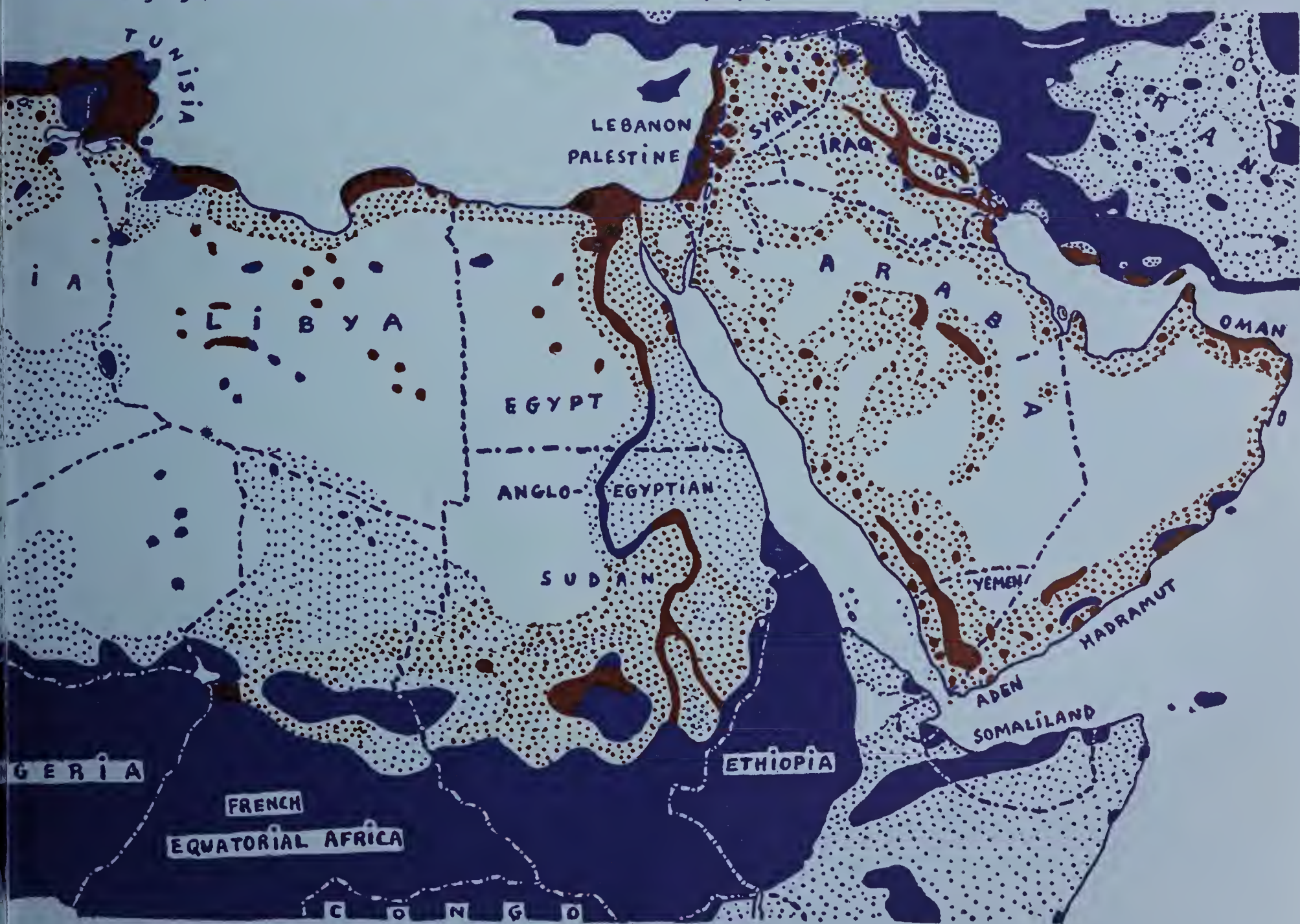
Arabic, even more than English, has become an international language; the use of it does not involve ethnic con-

notations; there is no "Arab world" in the political or national sense. But at least geographically, is there an Arabic-speaking world? Hardly. A linguistic map shows that the sedentary Arabic-speaking population does not cover a continuous area; it is scattered in oases all over the vast expanses of the Near East and the northern half of Africa, where many other languages have to be taken into account.

Culturally, the difference between various Arabic-speaking groups is enormous; for instance, Mediterranean communities such as the Lebanese or the Tunisians have little in common with people of the desert belt. Everywhere, from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean, the ways of life are determined by broad geographical and historical factors, rather than by the dialect which happens to be spoken.

This is exemplified by the very styles of architecture: they range from the eclectic Mediterranean type common among Berber, Arabic, French and Hebrew-speaking communities, to the more conservative forms of the hinterland, in Berber Morocco, in the Black Sudan and in Arabia; or to primitive shapes extant in Syria as well as in the heart of Africa.

To unravel the many mysteries of our past and to prepare for the coming crises of mankind, nothing is more urgent than an objective survey of this great geographical and human continent,—Africa, including the Near East. Such a survey would help in freeing the minds from the arbitrary, and therefore dangerous, preconceptions of conventional scholarship, as well as from the various myths used by political propaganda.



THE MEDITERR

The Mediterranean Levant is one of the focuses of international events and commands special attention within the frame of a Semito-African survey. Situated at the crossroads of the Old World, in the midst of its major land-masses and sea-basins, the Levant connects Africa with Eurasia, while linking the Mediterranean—and through it the entire Atlantic West—with the lands around the Indian Ocean.

The maritime region of the Levant, including that part which in Christian tradition came to be known as Palestine, is nothing but the biblical Canaan of the Hebrews,—or Phoenicia, as the Greeks called it. By its very location, Canaan was destined to play a unique part in history, never losing its world-wide importance, in visions of faith as well as in schemes of strategy. Today, once more, it becomes a crucial center of spiritual controversy and political competition.

There is hardly anywhere else a human problem more significant and many-sided. Few countries, through millennia of greatness or disaster, attracted such a diversity of settlers, invaders, pilgrims and succeeded in merging on their soil, in a single stream of civilization, so many conflicting influences; few countries shaped the thoughts and cultures of remoter peoples, and few gave birth, at home and abroad, to stronger loyalties; loyalties, through which the traditions of Canaan were upheld against all odds, not only among the familiar Mediterranean landscapes, but even in the strangest exiles.

Canaan deserves therefore to be studied and known in all its aspects and phases: in its ancient growth and lively intercourse with half the world, in its imperial expansion around the Mediterranean and decisive contributions to the "universal" religions, in the causes and effects of its decay since Roman and Islamic times, in the stubborn survival of its native traditions and in their present-day revival; and finally—in the conflicting questions raised by its future.

Unfortunately, the significance of the Mediterranean Levant, while stimulating at all times foreign research into some of its aspects or provinces, did not lead to any organic comprehension of the country's life. Every group or school viewed it from the outside, from a particular angle which did not allow to grasp the complex unity of Canaan's past and present.

There is, for instance, an archaeological and classical interest in Syria and Phoenicia, a Christian and Jewish interest in the "Holy Land,"—or more recently, a Zionist interest in the revival of a modern,

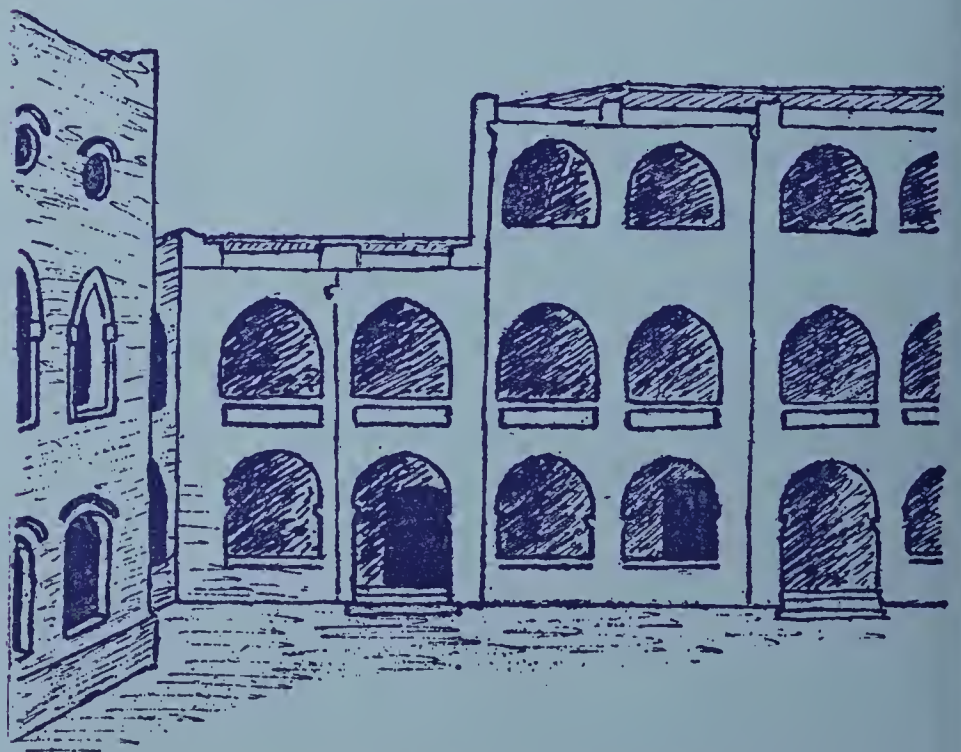


Names in blue are of Canaanite or Hebrew origin
" " " " in brown are of Greek

- Cities of ancient Canaanite (or Hebrew) origin
- " " " Greek
- " " modern Hebrew



Courtyard in Acre, Palestine.
The lower story was built by the Crusaders,
the upper—by the Moslems, under Saladin's successors.



Courtyard in the Hebrew High School at Tel Aviv.
The spirit of the Levant shows itself despite
differences of time, creed, materials, stylistic influences.

CANAAN LEVANT

narrowly defined Palestine. But taken as a whole, Canaan remains to be understood for its own sake, to be described "from the inside"—independently of the various sectional preconceptions and scholarly biases.

The materials for such a work are at hand, and the need for an independent synthesis has never been more urgent. Indeed, the insufficient knowledge of the country's historical background leaves the door open to the gravest misconceptions, fostered by foreign interests.

The very nature of the Mediterranean Levant is not properly understood nowadays: it is neither a province of the so-called "Arab World" nor is it a mere collection of unrelated districts and communities. On the contrary, the geographical and historical unity of Canaan is to be felt even today. Almost all the cities in the Levant are of Canaanite origin, none of any importance originated in Islamic times; despite the diversity of creeds, epochs, influences, the imprint of a common past is still perceptible.

Moreover, the sedentary Arabic-speaking Moslems hardly constitute half the total population; they are only a minority in the coastal region, the only one which has a dense, continuous and economically important settlement.

The current notion, opposing Zionism to an allegedly all-Arab Levant is therefore misleading. The Hebrews in Palestine are not the only Canaanite group faced with the consequences of the Arab myth: the Lebanese, for instance, especially their Maronite community, are no less vitally interested in preserving and restoring the Canaanite culture and autonomy of the maritime Levant.

Whereas ethnic conflicts are being inflated by political propaganda, social conditions prevailing in the Levant are being ignored. The appalling contrasts in standard of life among the Moslems, the ignorance and destitution of the masses, the social and political parasitism of the feudal landlords, identified with the Anglo-Arab system,—are one of the least studied but most important problems in the Levant.

A comprehensive and unbiased science of Canaanite history and society, past and present, is a prerequisite for a constructive approach to the future in the Levant,—one of the crucial regions of the Semito-African world.



Compare the neat house of the wealthy "effendi" (landlord) with the miserable hovels of the poorer Moslems, built from tin-cans and planks.



THE SEDENTARY POPULATION:

- Sedentary Arabic-speaking Moslems
- Hebrews
- Other non-Moslem or non-Arabic speaking communities

Each circle represents an average of 25,000 sedentary inhabitants.



Girl and boy dancing.
Prehistoric rock-painting in the Hoggar,
Central Sahara.